



Transition Planning: Considerations for Students With Disabilities and Families

There are many transitions that happen throughout the time children are in school. There are transitions from early childhood to preschool, preschool to kindergarten, elementary to middle school, middle school to high school, and transition for life after secondary education or high school. Planning for life after high school is called “post-secondary” transition planning. This is an important process and is a student with a disability’s legal right under the federal law, the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)*. While it is a legal requirement for schools to formally begin transition planning with students with disabilities by the time students turn 16 years old, planning earlier and even when children are very young can lead to greater self-advocacy, independence, and quality of life as adults. Schools and families can help students be more prepared for life after high school and improve their future outcomes by helping them increase their own expectations and improve their understanding of the importance of transition planning.

Transition and the Law

According to the [*Individuals with Disabilities Education Act \(IDEA\)*](#), transition planning is a process that needs to start for a student no later than the individualized education program (IEP) that will be in place when the student turns 16 years of age. However, it is recommended transition planning begins at 14 years of age or younger. The goal of transition planning is to make a smooth transition to life after high school. According to the IDEA, transition planning is individualized; based on the student’s strengths, preferences, and interests; and includes opportunities to gain knowledge and skills needed for continuing education, work, and community life.

Transition Planning

The student, in collaboration with other IEP Team members is the creator of the transition plan. The IEP Team may identify the need to invite a community agency that may pay for or provide services for the student after leaving high school. Parents, or the adult student, must provide written consent to invite a community agency representative to attend the IEP Team meeting. During transition planning, the IEP Team’s job is to:

- Consider the student’s goal(s) for life after high school.
- Talk about what the student can do related to their academics and useful (also called functional) skills.
- Identify transition activities which will provide opportunities to explore and learn more about the goal(s).
- Determine the course of study and identify what classes are available to develop knowledge needed for the goal(s).
- Determine services to build on strengths, and identify needed accommodations.
- Identify age-appropriate, measurable annual IEP goals that will develop skills necessary for the student’s after high school goals.

January 2025



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Family Matters fact sheets are intended to enhance public understanding of Michigan's special education system and are not a substitute for official laws and regulations.



Preparing for Transition

Students with disabilities have the most important role in the transition planning process. It is important the student provides input regarding their preferences and interests and understands their strengths and challenges, both in and out of the school setting. They should also understand the purpose and benefits of the IEP and the reason for transition planning.

The [IDEA regulation Sec. 300.320\(c\)](#) requires the school to notify the student and parent of the educational rights that will transfer from the parent to the student at least one year before the student reaches 18 years of age, which is the age of majority in Michigan. When the student reaches the age of majority, parents are only invited at the invitation of the student. Additional details are provided within [Family Matters Transition Age of Majority Considerations](#).

Summary of Performance

The district is required to provide the student with a Summary of Performance (SOP) before graduating from high school or before the student turns 26 years of age. The SOP provides the student's academic and functional performance levels and transition needs at the time the student completes high school. The SOP must be clear and understandable to the student and provide recommendations on how to help the student meet their postsecondary goals.

Vocational Rehabilitation in Michigan

In Michigan, the vocational rehabilitation agencies are [Michigan Rehabilitation Services \(MRS\)](#) and the [Bureau of Services for Blind Persons \(BSBP\)](#). MRS or BSBP can assist with work experiences, employment readiness, and other services. They can be involved as early as when a student reaches 14 years of age to assist with pre-Employment Training Services (pre-ETS). These services help to better prepare students for employment after high school. MRS and BSBP should be a part of transition planning if they are providing services to your child. The IEP team can help you decide whether MRS should be involved in your child's transition planning.

Community Mental Health (CMH)

Community Mental Health (CMH) may be involved in transition planning for assistance with behavioral, social, and life skills, depending on the needs of the student. The IEP team can help in determining whether CMH should be involved in your child's planning.

Resources

- Center for parent Information and Resources (CPIR):
 - » [Best Practices in Self-Advocacy Skill Building](#)
 - » [Transition to Adulthood](#)
- [Transition Planning Requirements of IDEA 2004 Fact Sheet](#)
- [Michigan Department of Education Office of Special Education: State Performance Plan Indicator B-13: Secondary Transition Data Collection Manual](#)
- [National Technical Assistance Center on Transition \(NTACT\): Transition Planning](#)
- [U.S. Department of Education Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services \(OSERS\): A Transition Guide to Postsecondary Education and Employment for Students and Youth with Disabilities \(Rev Aug 2020\)](#)



[Michigan Alliance for Families: Transition to Adulthood](#)

[Michigan Alliance for Families: Transition IEP Webinar](#)